

Book reviews

Virus Diseases of the Skin, Mucosa, and Genitalia (Virus-krankheiten der Haut, der Schleimhaut und des Genitales). By T. NASEMANN. 1974. Pp. 285, 232 figs., 12 col. pl., 32 tables. Thieme, Stuttgart (DM 69)

The incidence of genital warts, banal skin warts, herpes simplex infections, molluscum contagiosum, and other superficial virus diseases appears to be on the increase. This medium-sized book deals with these conditions and is both a textbook and an atlas. Most of the diseases would be seen by dermatologists and venereologists, but the book is intended for a wider readership of all those likely to encounter such conditions and who have no virological training. It is in general successful in its aim.

The illustrations, both in colour and black-and-white, are good and often excellent. Perhaps the proportion of advanced and flamboyant lesions might have been reduced in favour of the more common lesions of modest degrees of development.

The organization of the text would be improved by dealing with each condition *in toto* in compact chapters; as it is, there is some dispersal of material leading to a certain amount of repetition. There are only thirty references for the entire text which is on the skimpy side. The chapter on viruses producing or associated with tumours is fascinating and the author thinks it probable on the evidence published that *Herpesvirus hominis* Type II may be the aetiological factor in the development of carcinoma of the cervix. It is interesting to note that he accepts the value of specific killed herpes virus vaccine in the treatment and above all in the prophylaxis of recurrent herpes infections, as practised in some Austrian and German centres. If this is confirmed, the vaccine may prove of potential importance in the prophylaxis of cervical carcinoma.

This is an acceptable textbook for those for whom it is intended.

George Csonka

Tenements of Clay. By ARNOLD SORSBY. 1974. (Pp. 268, 37 figs, glossary. Julian Friedmann, London (£3.50))

This anthology of medical biographical essays gains its title from a quotation from John Dryden referring to the corruptibility of the human body. There are fifteen essays in the collection, their original publication dates ranging from 1914 to 1966. A wide variety of personalities and medical conditions is dealt with, from straightforward descriptions of Shakespeare's skull and brain to the fine piece of medical detection by McAlpine and Hunter, which culminated in arresting the decline of George III, by a retrospective diagnosis of porphyria.

The medical subjects are wide-ranging, covering Shakespeare's alleged writer's cramp to Samuel Johnson's medical experiences. Rarities include Abraham Lincoln's Marfan syndrome. Jane Austen's final illness of tuberculous disease of the suprarenal glands is well described by quotations from her letters, and these ante-date Addison's description of the disease which bears his name. The sad story of Napoleon's complaints and death on St. Helena is told by Arnold Chaplin. Sad, because his medical attendants, both pre- and post-mortem, served him poorly.

Amongst the most enjoyable in the collection is one of the editor's own contributions—'Milton's blindness'. The compassion with which the medical data are collected and appraised and the care and clarity of the step-by-step differential diagnosis are a joy.

Syphilis appears briefly in considerations of Job's pellagra and Swift's deafness. It looms large in Ove Brinch's essay on the medical problems of Henry VIII and Maurice Sorsby's considerations of the cause of Beethoven's deafness. These two contributions will be of special interest to venereologists. Henry's alleged gummata of the leg and nose receive detailed attention. The author is not at all clear on the anatomical location of the 'leg' ulcer. What a pity he did not seek a viewing of Henry's suit of armour which shows a boss constructed to accommodate the infirmity. The dismissal of syphilis as a possible cause of Beethoven's deafness appears hasty. The differential diagnosis fails to consider congenital and acquired syphilis separately and the family history is ignored. These two essays leave one with the feeling that both men's medical histories need the close attention of a venereologist well versed in the vagaries of clinical syphilis.

Lay readers, particularly, will welcome the editorial notes which introduce each of the essays, the special reference notes, and the glossary of medical terms. From the medical historians' point of view the curtailment of references and the absence of a brief biographical note concerning each essayist proved lamentable. This book will prove nonetheless to be absorbing holiday reading.

R. S. Morton

Sex and VD. By DEREK LLEWELLYN-JONES. 1974. Pp. 112, 28 figs. Faber and Faber, London (£2.90; paper-back 85p)

The red jacket and fly leaves of this small but informative and readily readable book by a Professor lately from Australia indicate that he is responsible for 'Everywoman—a Gynaecological Guide for Life' and books on the fundamentals of obstetrics and gynaecology which are